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COUNTERLAND OPERATIONS

AIR INTERDICTION OBJECTIVES

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It is not necessary for an air interdiction (AI) operation to focus on a single objective; AI typically inflicts multiple effects on the enemy. The enemy army traveling to the front while under air attack will suffer some level of destruction. The remaining force will likely be delayed in getting to its destination and will suffer some level of physical and psychological disruption. The following describes the objectives for interdiction.

Divert. AI diverts enemy fielded forces from areas where critically needed, to a location more favorable to the joint force commander (JFC), or around established lines of communications (LOCs). It may divert resources en route to repair and recover damaged equipment and facilities as well as forces tasked to keep existing LOCs open.

Disrupt. AI planners should focus on the enemy critical vulnerabilities that result in disruptive effects on command and control, intelligence collection, and transportation and supply lines (e.g., ammunition or petroleum, oil, and lubricants). Planners should consider the psychological effect on the enemy's morale and will. When analyzing the enemy considerations include the enemy's strategy, current operational situation, what reserves or workarounds are available to the enemy, and time before the enemy is affected by friendly actions.

Delay. Delaying the enemy allows friendly forces to gain time and momentum. While its purpose is to improve the JFC's operational environment, for delay to have a major impact on combat operations the enemy must face urgent movement requirements in support of its own operations or in countering friendly maneuver, or enhance the effect of a planned friendly maneuver. Ideally, by the air component maintaining the initiative, the opponent is forced to make unplanned urgent movements at times and places that maximize its exposure to additional friendly targeting. Delay payoffs include prolonging the time of risk of attack to land or naval forces, vehicles amassed behind a damaged route segment, or ships trapped in harbor due to mines, rendering them ineffective and making them more vulnerable to attack.

Destroy. Destruction of the enemy ground force, supporting elements, and supplies is the most direct of the four objectives of AI but the act (actual or perceived) may also provide synergy among the four. The enemy's perception of its imminent destruction

can achieve substantial delay and diversion of enemy resources, which can be as effective as physically destroying target systems, if it causes the enemy to react in a way friendly forces can capitalize. Destroying transportation systems may cause the enemy to move only at night or to mass air defense assets (which may be useful elsewhere) around critical transportation nodes. The actual or perceived destruction of LOCs may divert engineering resources from other tasks to prepare alternate routes in anticipation of possible attacks. This may be true when transportation systems remain largely undamaged. Planners should be cognizant that destruction may also inhibit friendly freedom of action. For example, destruction of key transportation targets could hinder future ground operations that intend to use the same infrastructure. Appropriate coordination of AI with other joint force components helps preserve friendly freedom of action.